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Amatenango del Valle

sion: "I pay respect to my elders. I greet my brothers and my children [extension of kinship terms]. To all I give respect. Thus I fare well. I have not been killed, nor have I been sick."

A good man is a generous host, expressed in the phrase, "he gives many tortillas." He serves his community in public office but avoids the appearance of seeking power or self-aggrandizement. When he gives orders, it is in a soft, low tone, supplicating rather than ordering with the phrase, "If you would please lend a hand." He gives thanks readily for any service rendered both to God and to his fellow man. He avoids any show of anger, and is always careful to show consideration of others. Those who are of "another heart" or "two-hearted" are the opposite, seeking disputes, "thinking small," "being miserly," and of a "very black soul."

The heightened awareness of the state of the heart of others comes from the ever-present fear of witchcraft. Since the people feel their survival depends upon perception of evil heart before it strikes, they develop an acute sense of the behavioral clues that indicate its presence.

Conformity and deviance. Conventional or preferred behavior is characterized as "reasonable." The phrase "ʔič' rason," to take reason or understanding, is applied to a child who is expected to have reason at the age of twelve years or so, as well as to the arrival at agreement of competing parties, as in the case of betrothal.

Reasonable behavior is any behavior conforming to socially accepted understandings of what the world is. These include what a person of non-Indian culture might characterize as beliefs based on faith. They "know" that there are hill spirits, wood spirits who cut off people's heads, and men who transform themselves into animals. Occasionally they subject given understandings to empirical tests: one woman tested the belief that a woman could rid the milpa of insect pests only by walking through a planted field wearing a new skirt; she walked through the field wearing a worn skirt and her belief was confirmed when she found that the insect pests were not killed but just fled and returned later. Empiricism is not lacking; the difference between the content of their category of what is rational or reasonable and ours is based on the premises, not the process of reasoning.